

National Veterans Wheelchair Games



Athlete Profile (National)

Orlando Perez
Army Veteran
35 years old
Augusta, Georgia

Orlando Perez has a signature shout when he takes part in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. For him, the Games are more than just a yearly competition – they're a way of life.

Perez, a paraplegic, was injured when he was 19, while serving in the Army. He began competing in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games at age 24, in 1999.

After 11 years, he's learned how to overcome challenges, test his limits and be a shining example for other injured Veterans.

Inspired by his experience as a mentor at the Games, Perez enrolled at Oklahoma State University to earn a degree in recreation therapy so that he can help guide other injured Veterans year-round.

When describing his favorite memories, of the Wheelchair Games, Perez talks of serving as a mentor for Kids Day at the Games and how much it means for him to see the smiles of the children attending.

His steadfast desire to help others contributed to his selection as 2005 Spirit of the Games Award winner, another favorite memory for Perez.

Though he clearly enjoys being a role model, he also relishes the competition. At the Games, Perez is perhaps best known for his skills on the basketball court, playing so fiercely he often falls out of his chair. In 2009, he won two silver medals in track, one in basketball and gold in the 100 meter race, contributing to the large collection he's amassed over the years.

"I enjoy the fact that the Games get better every year," said Perez. "You can see the level of competition and brotherhood grow with the newly injured soldiers returning from overseas, and I'm sure the event in Denver will be another great time."

